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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the dilemmas of leadership experienced by principals and superintendents in Norway. The term "dilemma" refers to contradictory orientations that these educational leaders experienced in their job activities. Dilemmas are categorized in terms of legality, which pertains to the formal steering of the schools, or in terms of legitimacy, which refers to those informal control mechanisms rooted in tradition and culture. The paper presents outcomes of an action research project in which the principals and superintendents in three Norwegian cities participated. Project elements included observations, counseling, peer review, journal writing, and reflection. Data were collected through field notes from the observations, peer reviews, and group meetings; analysis of journal entries; and interviews with participants. The following dilemmas were analyzed in terms of state legality versus social legitimacy: (1) administrative control versus professional autonomy; (2) confrontation versus individual autonomy; (3) challenge versus support; (4) change versus stability; (5) ad hoc problem solving versus reflection and long-term planning; and (6) loyalty to students and parents versus loyalty to teachers. To understand educational leadership, local activities must be related to broader political, social, and cultural issues. In addition, the hierarchical structure and the ways in which micropolitical activities within schools both steer and restrict activities and perceptions must be examined. (LMI)

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REFRAMING EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF DILEMMAS

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Introduction

The paper reports dilemmas of leadership experienced by principals and superintendents in the Norwegian context. Dilemma was used as a concept to capture the alternative or contradictory orientations the leaders experienced. Examples of dilemmas are elaborated and discussed; each can be analyzed through the lens of **legality** versus **legitimacy**. The term legality pertains to the formal steering of the schools, while legitimacy stands for those informal control mechanism rooted in traditions and culture.

In order to give a better understanding of the context wherein the reported dilemmas emerged, the first part of the paper sketches the background for the study, the research questions which were addressed, rationale for the methodological approach, and a description of how the study was initiated and conducted.

1. Background and Context

Major reforms on almost all levels in education are now taking place in Norway, as in most of the Western industrialized countries. In the public debate, a key word in these reforms is decentralization. But parts of the reforms can be identified as centralization (Karlsen 1993). It depends on which changes you are focusing, from which perspective you analyze the changes, and how you understand the sum of efforts towards restructuring. Decentralization is also defined as a state steering strategy, which also emphasizes the paradox of the twin tendencies of decentralization and centralization.

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In Parliamentary Report No. 37 (1990-91) "On Organization and Guidance in the Educational Sector" the policy statements towards restructuring[1] of schools are outlined. Management by objectives, adjusted to the school as an organization, is said to be a central principle of governance. Thus the Ministry will continue decentralizing the regulation of education by rules and by giving the local authorities more autonomy and better possibilities to plan their economy. At the same time they will centralize the control of goals by means of a new national curriculum where the goals are more clearly articulated, and tied to a national evaluation program. The principal is given increased formal power and is placed in a key role in implementing the curriculum and evaluation program. The new role demands a more active participation on issues concerning classroom practices, demands more supervisory activities, and puts more emphasis on the employer role.

The Common Curriculum Guidelines for grades 1 to 9, which were introduced in 1987, emphasized the collaborative efforts among teachers by demanding the development of a local curriculum at the school level. But to change a culture of "privacy" in teaching, takes time, and we have no tradition of monitoring or teacher appraisal. The principal seldom interferes with what is going on in the classroom.

From my earlier experiences as a supervisor at the county level with responsibility for leadership development and in-service-training, I had learned that the new role "mandated" from above, caused a lot of concern and uncertainty for superintendents, principals and teachers. "Answers" to educational challenges were given or advocated. In policy documents "building learning organization", had become the new "magic concept". More professional and reflective practice among educators was given as the answer to increase the quality in teaching and learning. However, it was more difficult to uncover the meaning in everyday practice, because at the same time more attention was given to accountability and control of teaching. Given this specific situation, I chose to develop the

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[1] Restructuring is used as a term which embraces major changes to the organization of teaching and learning, to decision-making structures, to the conditions of teaching, to the patterns of roles and power relationships in schools, and to the content of education (cf.Hargreaves 1991).

more precise research questions in interaction with people in leadership position at different levels in the school system. Although leadership is not necessarily connected with formal position, I wanted to examine how principals and superintendents experienced and conceptualized their leadership role in a specific political and cultural context. As a result of discussions and interaction with principals and superintendents from three municipalities, the following research questions were addressed in the study:

* What does educational leadership mean in the Norwegian context, and how is it understood by some principals and superintendents?

* What happens when principals and superintendents establish critical inquiries into their own practice?

* What gain and strain derives from choosing action research as an approach to the development of educational leadership?

This paper focuses on the first question.

2. Methodological approach

In order to understand educational leadership in the Norwegian context, I have tried to combine different traditions of research. One part of the study gives a historical analysis of how the functions of leadership have developed. This analysis can contribute to an understanding of how and why the controlling and legitimating functions have changed during the last decade, and how history and culture at the same time create a stability and a pattern which are not so simple to change (Lundgren 1986). This becomes an integral part of the explanation of the regularities explored. At the same time we need to see changes in schools as part of what is happening in society as a whole (Hargreaves 1994).

But educational leadership is difficult to understand independent of how people working in schools interpret and give the concept meaning in everyday life. To focus too much on structures, results in determinism as if actors cannot make a difference (Cf. Greenfield & Ribbins 1993). But to focus too much on actors, will produce a highly individualistic perspective, not recognizing how individuals both shape and are shaped by structure (Bates 1989, Foster 1989, Watkins 1989). The choice of theoretical framework indicates that to understand the interrelationship between structures and actors, it is necessary to

combine macro, meso and micro perspective. However, in this study the main focus will stay on the micro level, but findings here will be related to analysis of other levels.

In order words, I try to apply a dual perspective combining cultural and political concepts to gain a better understanding of educational leadership. While a cultural perspective tends to overemphasize consensus resting on shared values, the political perspective tends to overemphasize conflict based on incompatible interests.

On-going peer review and critical inquiries became a central issue in the research questions addressed in the study. Such a practice is definitely not a characteristic of the school-culture in Norway. To study it, one would have to create an alternative in the every-day practice. And the constructive type of question was the main legitimation for choosing an action research approach (Kalleberg 1990), although it was also inspired by Schön's (1984) advocating for an alternative approach to research on educational administration.

The approach had the possibility to contribute to the practical concerns of principals and superintendents in a situation where new role prescripts demanded a more active participation on issues concerning classroom practices. They saw action research as a means both to develop their own competence and improve practice (cf. Carr & Kemmis 1986, Elliott 1991). At the same time the action research approach could contribute to a better understanding of educational leadership; how principals and superintendents described educational leadership, how they explained their actions in specific situations, and how these descriptions could be related to the historical and cultural context.

3. How the Study was Initiated and Conducted

3.1 A three-stage negotiation between researcher and participants:

In preparing the study I cooperated with the School Director of the County of Oslo and Akershus, and constructed a three-step negotiation with municipalities and schools to ensure clear agreement that the ideas were promising, and that the participants were willing to commit themselves to a collaborative project over a two-years period.

In a first step, I wrote about my ideas for a collaborative project, focusing on educational leadership and the context of restructuring, in a letter to all 23 superintendents in the county, inviting them to a meeting if they were interested. The next step was the meeting where further details of the project were discussed with superintendents who had declared interest, potential gain and strain were emphasized; and the terms of participation were elaborated further. The terms included both time-release, commitment from the superintendent and the schools, and economy. The participation was limited to three municipalities, so I asked the superintendents to apply for participation after this meeting. Five superintendents applied for participation in the project.

After having selected three municipalities based on the superintendent's commitment to the project in the application, as far it was possible to understand and interpret it in a written statement, a third step required the principals and the vice-principals to confirm the agreement to participate. A meeting was organized in each of the three municipalities, and each of the participants were asked why they had chosen to participate. Again we discussed the terms of participation and possible gain and strain in participating in such a project, stressing it was still time to withdraw. I tried to be clear about what I thought could be the required time, but emphasized that it was very difficult to anticipate this in advance. This was a collaborative project where they could have a voice. I also included my own interest in the project as a part of my career as an academic, and as part of a doctoral thesis.

Their decision to participate was a combination of an interest in exploring promising new ideas, expectations of professional growth, getting a chance to work closely with peers from other schools and school-levels. Some also saw the project as important given the political situation in Norway with growing skepticism towards schools, and the plans for national evaluation. The project could represent a proactive action instead of a reactive action. But it became also clear that some were not sure what they had committed themselves to, and some of the principals had even felt forced into the project by their superintendent. Anyway, after having had an opportunity to discuss their own interest in a project, they were willing to give it a try.

We negotiated what was of practical concern to the principals and the superintendents, owing to the specific political context in Norway, and tried to sort out our sharing and separate interests, as far as it was possible to say in advance. We also agreed upon procedures for my publication of data based on fieldnotes, journalwritings, and interviews. One important principle was to include their response and critique to a preliminary interpretation of the data. I also saw reciprocal critique as a guard against imposition an idealized abstraction on the part of the researcher (Cf. Lather 1986). The meaning should be constructed through negotiation with the participants, and the release of data should also be negotiated (cf. Simons 1987).

The negotiation procedure that took place before the project started, was perceived and articulated as important to hinder misunderstanding that otherwise could emerge later. However, throughout the project I learned this was not just a question of establishing the right technical procedures (Cf. Jenkins 1978). It also became a moral issue (Møller 1994).

3.2 Observation, Peer Review and Journalwriting

The main features of the project were connected to observation, counselling, peer review, journalwriting and reflection amongst colleagues and facilitators. In the project we emphasized observing everyday situations. Therefore the principals and the superintendents were asked not to stage special situations when an observer was present. This is of course difficult, because an observer will always have an impact on a situation. But we wished to investigate what kind of learning opportunities arose in the daily activity when one made use of systematic observation and reflection. We agreed upon eight observation-days at each school and each office of superintendent. In addition seminars and group-meetings were organized where the participants reflected on their experiences with observation, journalwriting and peer-review.

The criteria for observation emerged out of a shared discussion of theory and practice, and were agreed upon in advance. The principals and superintendents were asked to explicate the "theory" of leadership implicit in their own practices. Together with two consultants from the School Director's Office, I worked as an external facilitator. As facilitators we tried to help them reflect about their practices in the light of theories they articulated. The

discussion often centered around the question: What does it mean to exercise good leadership practice in this context? What did you do in this context that serves as an example of your "theory" of leadership? How can you explain it? Argyris and Schön's (1978) distinction between "espoused theory" and "theory-in-use" functioned as an analytical framework. We also tried to combine experiences with theory by providing analytic concepts which could be helpful in analyzing the practice.

3.3 Data Collection

The research was qualitative in design and comprised several methods for collecting data. Throughout the project I tried to secure solid documentation of what was happening and how the leaders interpreted different events. Data is based on field notes from observations, peer review, and groupmeetings. In addition the participants' journal writings served as important documentation. Before groupmeetings the leaders were asked to reflect on certain issues in a journal. I conducted interviews and kept a personal journal, reporting and reflecting on what I was doing, how and why the research process developed. Meetings with the other two facilitators and with the School Director, where we examined our facilitation strategies, were also recorded.

Data were collected in a systematic way and reported back successively. The analyses which were given back to the participants, were treated as hypothetical, and the participants were encouraged to respond. But the participants also emphasized the different work conditions between being a researcher and a principal or a superintendent, given the differences in time to reflect on practice and issues. The relationship could very easily turn out a-symmetrical where they accepted the analysis because they did not have time to look at it critically. The mutual trust of non-exploiting behavior became important. And you establish trust by building a shared history of predictable performance on these issues.

4. Reframing educational leadership in the perspective of dilemmas

4.1 A Job Characterized by Contradictory Expectations, Brevity, and Discontinuity

When we started our collaborative research project, each principal and superintendent was asked to register management/leadership actions and reflect on their own leadership on four different days during a week. An alternative was to describe a critical incident where they didn't know how to handle a situation, or where they felt uneasy with the solution they had taken. The purpose for journalwriting was to become aware of the kinds of situations one pays attention to and the thinking attached to it.

The **principals**' journal writings show a day with constant interruptions where they continually have to respond to emergencies. Housekeeping and maintaining order are given significant weight, and all problems are seen as important. It seems difficult to give priorities to different situations. The superintendent, staff and parents must be satisfied, the school must be supplied with adequate materials and, in addition, they have to take care of teaching duties as part of their job. They are strongly action oriented and have very little time for reflection on actions taken. They seem to be constantly responding to the needs of the moment. Time pressure was mentioned as a frustrating aspect of their job. The **superintendents**' journal writings show a similar pattern. This pattern is consistent with findings reported in Fullan's (1982, 1991) summary of research on principals and district administrators, and in research on leadership conducted in Sweden (Stålhammar 1985, Lundgren 1986). Leaders are strongly oriented to action and they seldom give reflective activities priority.

Among those who focused on critical incidents, the journal writings were dominated by the managing of conflict on an ad hoc basis. The ambiguity in the nature of demands is a significant element in the job of being a principal or a superintendent. In a way they are squeezed between the intentions of the state and policymakers, what parents require, what teachers expect, and what students need. Their journals give a picture where they complain about teachers not doing their jobs, where they feel depressed by managing conflicts among staff and parents, and where they describe the difficulties attached to implementing a national curriculum which they believe in.

The combination of being a teacher and a principal was stated as particularly difficult at the school level. It resulted in an even more fragmented day where one often had to leave activities unfinished. This picture was confirmed throughout the two years I followed principals and superintendents in their jobs. Some of them stated that the time they had planned for the project, designed for reflecting on their action, was conceived as a luxury activity. A few principals also felt guilt, because they were not available for their staff during these hours of reflective work.

4.2 Towards a Dilemma Language of Educational Leadership

Administrators are to some degree caught in a constant struggle "pulled at the same time upwards toward state mandates and downwards toward collegial/parental expectations" (Hannaway & Crowson 1989:3). The contradictory expectations toward principals and superintendents result in situations which require choices where competing values cannot be fully satisfied. Which expectations are most important? To whom does ones loyalty lie in a conflict situation? Sometimes one has time to reflect on what is desirable and it is possible to take both moral values and practical consequences into account. But often the decisions are taken spontaneously and intuitively. Decisions can only in retrospect be analyzed, understood and given meaning.

The action research project offered an opportunity to systematically reflect on action with colleagues and an external facilitator. Together we were engaged in developing an analytical framework which could help us analyze, understand and give meaning to what had happened in specific situations which called for leadership. Often leaders described their actions in everyday practice as a choice within different sets of dilemmas. The dilemma was a concept which captured the contradictory orientations they experienced, and where there were no right answers. Each course of action carried its cost and benefit. The challenge was to find adequate compromises (jfr. Berlak & Berlak 1981, Cuban 1992). By organizing and stimulating reflection on action among peers, it became possible to discover how different factors were interrelated. This gave leaders an opportunity to become aware of internal and external forces that bear on their own solutions, and to clarify alternative courses of action.

In other words, thinking in terms of dilemmas was part of the principals' and superintendents' own conceptualizing. Dilemmas were also presented within a theoretical framework at seminars and meetings later in the project. Berlak and Berlak (1981) and Ball (1987) were important references. Based upon data which comprised observations in schools and district offices, discussions and interviews with the people participating in the project, and their journal writings, two general areas of dilemmas emerged: dilemmas related to loyalty and dilemmas related to control and steering issues. Although overlapping and complex, they can, nevertheless, be divided this way for analytical purposes. One will find moral and ethical dimensions interwoven, particularly within dilemmas related to loyalty. Often the moral dimension is more implicit than acknowledged. Sometimes it is mobilized and made explicit through reflection with peers.

The specific "dilemma-language" for leadership reported in this paper, was my construction based on the leaders' description of and reflection on their everyday practice. However, when I presented the analysis, they confirmed that I had captured important aspects of their work, as they understood it.

The dilemmas of loyalty were expressed in actions where there was a tension between

loyalty to common curriculum	versus	loyalty to personal pedagogical values
loyalty to students/parents	versus	loyalty to teachers
loyalty to superiors	versus	loyalty to local staff/personal values

The dilemmas of steering were expressed in actions where there was a tension between

administrative control	versus	professional autonomy
confrontation and claims	versus	individual freedom
challenge	versus	support
change	versus	stability

In addition, a dilemma of **ad hoc problemsolving versus reflection and long-term planning** emerged, probably as a result of participating in action research. It has neither to do with dilemmas of loyalty, nor with steering, but as I will show later in the paper, it deals with leaders' apirations to be considered as professionals.

What I have chosen to describe as **dilemmas of loyalty**, are, as already mentioned, related to significant moral and ethical issues. At the heart of educational practice is the making of moral decisions (jfr.Cuban 1992:7). When I, nevertheless, do not choose to use the concept moral or ethical dilemmas in this context, it has to do with the way these dilemmas were perceived by the practioners. Moral imperatives are not necessarily part of the leaders' pattern of resolution, even though the same dilemmas can be reframed in a moral perspective. The data from the project shows several situations where principals and superintendents discuss and have to decide to whom and what their loyalty is attached. The superintendents participating in the project were very much engaged in the implementation of the national curriculum. Their loyalty to this curriculum was clearly expressed, and they initiated courses for teachers and principals related to central issues in the curriculum. Their loyalty in this respect was also reflected in cases presented for the school board. On the school level the same pattern was found when espoused theories were expressed. When it came to theories-in-use it was far more difficult, and the principals were sandwiched between contradictory expectations. Some were also unaware of having a practice contradictory to central values in the national curriculum.

The dilemmas of steering have become even more problematic owing to the paradox of the twin tendencies of decentralization and centralization. The Ministry and politicians expect principals to be the most important change agents for school development in a culture where individual autonomy has been a central value for a long time. The "zones of influence" (cf. Berg 1990:83ff, Shedd & Bacharach 1991:59) are being disturbed by mandates from the state. But it will still be a question of how much it is possible for the principal to influence classroom practice, and whether the principal has anything to offer in order to improve practice. Without a common language for analyzing teaching and limited traditions for reflecting on teaching, both teachers and principals must now learn very quickly to communicate in ways that match their subtle sense of teaching (cf. Little 1988). Will the teachers accept the principal as a supervisor? The answer is probably, that it depends on what he or she has to offer.

Dilemmas of loyalty and steering can both be analyzed in the perspective of **legality and legitimacy** (Berg 1990:28-29, 1993:170-71). These key-concepts relate to the tension

between formal and informal steering of schools.

> Generally speaking the term state legality pertains to the formal steering of schools codified and manifested in the form of curricula, rule systems, and so on. Social legitimacy for its part stands for those informal control mechanisms that are rooted in such things as traditions, rituals, school code/culture, trends in public opinion and/or other unwritten rules (Berg 1993:1).

These key-concepts highlight a perspective of leadership as relational and dialectic (cf. Ljunggren 1991, Wadel 1992) and encourage identification of power relations and conflicts of interests in schools. A basis of a relational conception of power can be found in Giddens' (1979:93) definition:

> Power within social systems can thus be treated as involving reproduced relations of autonomy and dependence in social interaction. Power relations therefore are always two-way, even if the power of one actor or party in a social relation is minimal compared to another.

To see power as a relationship means, in other words, that both the actions of subordinates and the actions of superordinates influence the structures of domination. And all actors both constitute and are constituted by the structures in which they find themselves. A similar approach to understanding leadership has been offered by Foster (1986), Bates (1989), and Smyth (1989). **The legitimacy of leadership** cannot be commanded, it can only be granted. The same way teachers may limit a principal's actions, the principals may limit a superintendent's actions, and vice versa (cf. Cuban 1988:194-195). Micropolitical actions will be mobilized when there is a threat of loosing obtained autonomy (cf. Hoyle 1986, Ljunggren 1991, Blase 1989). This is a phenomenon traditional theories on leadership based on a structural or human-resource perspective (Bolman & Deal 1991) do not take into account, thereby loosing an important aspect of understanding the process of educational leadership.

Ann and Harold Berlak's (1981) classroom research, resulting in their development of a language of sixteen dilemmas, has served as an inspiration to develop a set of similar terms for actions of principals and superintendents.

> The dilemma language of schooling is an effort to represent the thought and action of teachers as an ongoing dynamic of behavior and consciousness within particular institutional contexts of schools for the young. The dilemmas are not to be conceived as entities that may be physically located either in persons' heads or in

> society. Rather they are linguistic constructions that, like lenses, may be used to focus upon the continuous process of persons acting in the social world (Berlak & Berlak 1981:111).

Also Ball (1987:156-165) has used Berlak's analysis as an inspiration to capture some of the contradictory expectations facing heads (principals), in a language of dilemmas. Referring to data from teachers on the issue of headship, he discusses two general areas of dilemmas, "**participation versus control**", and "**the physical versus the personal**". Each dilemma contains a number of sub-dilemmas. The teachers' experiences and feelings on the issue of headship are highly contradictory.

> Ideal heads, it would seem, must combine strength with openness, be able to assert their own views and ideas while taking full account of the views and ideas of the staff. To err on the side of strength is to court the label of tyrant (Ball 1987:158).

According to Ball's analysis of the first area of dilemmas, hardly anyone seemed to achieve the balance of "participation versus control" that satisfied many of their staff. They were either accused of holding too firmly on to their own ideas, failing to take into account alternative views, or accused of being too weak or indecisive. Their actions were also interpreted differently by different teachers. My field observations of the relationships between superintendents and principals show a similar pattern. The principals were also fully aware of different expectations from different teachers within their staff.

Ball's second area of dilemmas, "the physical versus the personal" concerns involvement within the school versus developing roles in relation to outside audiences. Again his study shows how that the same actions may be interpreted differently within the staff. Some teachers criticized their head for lack of interest and involvement if they spent to much time outside the school building. Other teachers saw that the very same activities could bring indirect benefits to the school, for instance attract attention to the school, and prepare the school for changes. The same was the case for the "local head". He or she would be either accused of not fighting for the school at times of external threat, or would be accused of spying and interfering or seen as wasting time when there was more important things to do.

> Damned if you do and damned if you don't - that seems to be the message. [...] Heads and their followers are trapped in this sealed political dialectic of

> colleagueship and hierarchy, professional and employee. Furthermore, the work of headship carries with it the vestiges of a fixed and traditional form of school relationship which has to be set against the changing demands of a turbulent contemporary environment (op.cit.:164).

Ball developed his "dilemma-language" working with data from teachers on the issues of headship, and with particular reference to the English political and cultural context. My study gave an opportunity to gain insight into which dilemmas principals and superintendents experienced in the Norwegian political and cultural context, and how they tried to manage them.

Ball's first dilemma group "participation versus control" was highly acknowledged also when seen from the perspective of Norwegian principals or superintendents. These will be found in the group I have called **dilemmas related to steering**.

Ball's second group, "the physical versus the personal", was, however, less obvious. It was rather an acknowledgement of having too much of an internal perspective on their job, althhough there were a few incidents where principals found it difficult to stay away from school. The differences between my study and Ball's may be a result of different cultural context, the fact that market forces are influencing the Norwegian school to a lesser degree, so far, and the fact that the dilemmas reported in this paper, were developed from the perspective of principals and superintendents.

4.3 The dilemma-orientation used to analyze everyday-experiences of principals and superintendents.

The "dilemma-language" applied to specific situations of leadership shows how interwoven different dilemmas are. Every-day practice is complex, and the same situation would comprise several dilemmas. The immediate interpretation of a situation in terms of a dilemma is seldom the only way of understanding what is happening. As you unravel the patterns of resolutions, a different kind of dilemma often turns out to be involved as well (cf. Groundwater-Smith 1993). Understanding educational leadership in the perspective of dilemmas should therefore include considering the same situations through the perspective of different dilemmas. In the following text, I will give examples of some of the

dilemmas, and I choose to highlight a specific dilemma by referring to specific actions of leadership. To some degree, however, I will try to show how the different dilemmas are connected to each other, and can be analyzed in the perspective of state legality versus social legitimacy.

4.3.1 Administrative Control versus Professional Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is often seen as the symbol of professional status; it is a positively value-laden concept, and it is taken-for-granted that it will also limit the power of the principal. I will, however, distinguish between individual autonomy (cf. Hoyle 1986:120), concerning the autonomy each teacher has in his or her classroom, and collective autonomy, concerning the school as a whole (cf. Berg 1993:58). As I will show later, collective autonomy is synonymous with professional autonomy, not individual autonomy. In the Norwegian context neither external nor internal accountability issues have emerged on the agenda until recently. There has been a strong norm of non-interference in the teacher's classroom activities.

Change in society's economy has, however, accentuated the opposition between control and autonomy in schools. Established zones of control are challenged. In the media there are complaints about the quality of education, and the lack of necessary academic and social qualifications obtained by students by the time they enter university or employment. Teachers are depicted as antagonistic to change. The Ministry follows up by placing the principal in a key role in change efforts and school improvement. Their increased formal power may also mobilize the micropolitics between principals and superintendents.

The following situation[2] can be used to highlight **the dilemma of administrative control versus professional autonomy**.

> The staff at Hillside, a primary school, has through a long process developed a shared vision and formulated a shared policy. Glasser's "School without Failure" has inspired teachers to organize their relationship with students in specific ways,

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[2] The description from Hillside is based on the principal's presentation of a case which was discussed with peers at a meeting. The principal at Hillside school needed an advice about what to do in this specific situation. Hillside school is a primary school with 220 students and 19 teachers.

involving students in curriculum planning and problemsolving. They are trying to break down the boundaries between the different classes, having a shared responsibility for all students at the school. When new teachers are employed, both the principal and the teachers are engaged in sharing their vision and motivating for commitment.

When Hansen got a tenure at this school, he received a lot of information about how the school was working, what goals they had set, and how they tried to accomplish them. In conversations with the principal, Hansen says he will be committed to the school's vision. There is, however, often a gap between espoused theories and theories-in-use. The principal very soon understands that Hansen is not able to differentiate the curriculum in class. He is also unwilling to accept shared responsibility for all the students. His concern is his own classroom and his own students. He doesn't care for other students.

The principal decides that he has to do something, and initiates several conversations with Hansen. He gives him pedagogical literature to read, and he ensures that experienced teachers at schools are willing to share their knowledge with Hansen. However, nothing seems to have any affect. Now Hansen insists on teaching in his own way. To the principal a dilemma emerges, and he frames the dilemma by the following questions: Can I accept that a teacher refuses to follow the school policy? For how long shall I accept this when this teacher has declared that he will be loyal to the school's vision when he started working at the school? When is the time for support, and when is the time for confrontation and demands? When do you use sanctions? What kind of sanctions do I have? The principal fears that noninterference will have a negative effect on the rest of the staff. Is it a good idea to try to persuade this teacher to move on to another school where individual autonomy is still accepted?

The dilemma concerns what it means to be a professional, and when the principal has the right to interfere. It can be analyzed **through the lens of legality versus legitimacy**. No doubt, seen from the perspective of legality, the principals has the right to interfere with classroom activities in this situation. But the question is if this will be of any help to the students. The principal can to a very small degree influence employment policy[3]. Hiring is done by the school board at the municipal level where the teacher unions also have an important voice. The opportunity to influence firing is even less. Thus, in reality the principal lacks sanctions to apply. He is left to rely on argumentative authority. The many

[3] This is an issue that is under debate in the Norwegian context right now. Many politicians call for a change where principals can appoint teachers, but so far, the teacher-unions have succeeded in fighting against this change in law.

conversations with the teacher, referred to in this example, have the purpose of convincing the teacher that changing practice is to the benefit of the students. But we do not know if this teacher is a bad teacher for the students. We only have the principal's perception and description of the situation.

The importance of developing a vision has been emphasized the last years (cf.Hoyle 1986). Research on leadership has particularly dealt with strategies used by school administrators to influence a more collaborative culture in schools (Leithwood & Jantzi 1990, Leithwood & Steinbach 1993). A shared vision and commitment building among staff are perceived to be crucial to school improvement. The rationale behind shared vision building has to do with the creation of meaning, ownership and mutual trust. But as Hargreaves and Fullan (1991) has pointed out in their analysis, there is a peril to beware of here. "While commitment to collaboration is important, over-commitment or compulsion can be damaging" (p.94). Vision without voice very easily results in bureaucratic control. But the opposite makes it impossible to validate education.

As the situation at Hillside school shows, building a shared vision doesn't solve the dilemma of steering. The stability of staff members may change. New people are coming in without the same ownership to the vision. The principal and the teachers are left with the challenge to include new members of staff in the established culture without disempowering them. How can one balance between mandates and menus? And maybe the established culture needs critical voices?

The situation also highlights what it means to be a professional teacher, and who is going to define standards for good teaching. This can explain why the dilemma is difficult to manage. Neither the principal nor anyone else can prescribe what is going to happen in classrooms. One needs to maintain a balance between individuality and collaboration and recognize that there must be room for individual ways of teaching. However, teachers have a lot more collective tasks now compared to earlier days. Thus, the need for developing a collective knowledge base and to reflect on teaching among peers has increased. The system is in addition only partially independent. As a profession, teachers have freedom of movement within the limits defined by what society expects of its

schools. However, these boundaries for action are abstract, indistinct, and often contradictory. The reason is to be found in the conflict-permeated structure of the state school system (cf.Berg 1993). But it is not correct to interpret the autonomy given by the society, as an individual freedom. The autonomy is given to the profession.

> Teacher autonomy has long been interpreted as freedom from scrutiny and the right of each individual teacher to make independent judgments about classroom practice. It should be interpreted as the right of the teaching profession to construct and uphold standards of good teaching, and the obligation of individual teachers to examine closely their own and others' professional judgments (Little 1988:).

The standards of good teaching are to a great extent implicit, and the critical reflection which could serve as a protection against arbitrariness in teaching and also a guard against the power of the profession, is not taken care of. Both the principals and the teachers need to examine closely their own and others' professional judgements (cf. Handal 1989).

The dilemma experienced by the principal at Hillside school, can also serve as an example of **the dilemma of demands/confrontation versus individual autonomy**. From the arguments above, it should follow that individual autonomy is difficult to accept. But the principal's dilemma doesn't disappear with that. To change a culture of "privacy" in teaching requires a long-term strategy where in-service-training is combined with support, challenge and patience. In addition structural frames must be changed.

Reflecting further on the situation, one will discover **dilemmas related to issues of loyalty** in the situation at Hillside school. As a middle-manager the principal has the responsibility to implement the common curriculum. In this case, the principal found that the teacher did not differentiate his teaching in proper ways, although having a mixed ability group in the class. Consequently, one could say that the principal should interfere. He will find support in the school law. But, nevertheless, the possibility to act seems a lot more limited. At the same time, as an employer, the principal has a caring responsibility for his staff. What is the best way of caring in this situation?

Similar steering dilemmas as described at the school level in this case, can be found in the relationship between the principal and the superintendent. In this relationship the principal

is the subordinate, and the superintendent is subordinate in the relationship to the regional authority. They are at the same time bosses and subordinates. They are expected to lead and direct others while obeying orders. In fact, teachers, principals and superintendents have a lot in common. Even though the settings vary, they perform the same roles - instructional, managerial and political roles, share the same commitment to a common purpose anchored in student growth and work within bureaucratic organizations where members are simultaneously subordinates and superiors. But how they define their limit of what can or cannot be done, will differ and permit a whole range of practices (Cf. Cuban 1988:179-195).

4.3.2 Change versus stability

The principal as a change agent is focused in the debate of restructuring in Norway. But both at the school level and at the district level, leaders experience the internal pressure towards stability rather than change. Even though we have a state education policy embodied in legislation, curricula, and regulations, it is passed through various kinds of "filters" from the central government to the regional, the municipal, and the school levels. And state directives, often being highly contradictory, will be interpreted by different people at different levels. Sometimes it is, at school level, considered as good leadership to create resistance to state reforms because significant values are at risk in the context of budget cutting. All changes are not necessarily worth fighting for.

How and where does the principal or the superintendent get their legitimacy to lead? Lortie (1987) is rather pessimistic about the the principal's potentiality of being a change agent. There is a strong pressure toward conservative attitude and stability within the system. In his study of principals in Chicago, he found that there were four powerful tendencies toward stability, related to recruitment, role constraints and psychic rewards, constraint of system standardization and career contingencies. Stålhammar's (1985) study shows similar tendencies. Very few principals initiated changes at the school level. Pressure toward stability was far more important.

My study reveals that principals' approach to change is very cautious, even when they have a strong pressure from superordinates to act as change agents. It seems best to be on

the safe side, not disturbing every-day-practice too much. But there is an acknowledgement of the need for changes in schools. I will refer to one situation which happened at Village school, to give a better picture of **the dilemma change versus stability**.[4]

> The principal and vice-principal at Village school asked a peer for consultation and observation concerning a staff meeting they were planning. The topic was new role expectations towards teachers. The leaders found some teachers' attitude towards caring problematic. By putting this topic on the agenda of a staff meeting, following up later with in-service-training, they hoped for less complaints about students. According to the principal's opinion, the teachers were complaining too much instead of asking what is best way of helping these children who need caring. Empathy and priorities could be a better solution. But at the same time the principal knew he could very easily be perceived as increasing the teachers' workload, stress and guilt instead of giving necessary support. He wanted to initiate change in staff culture without increasing stress.
>
> In the staff meeting they chose to focus on what they should do with students who were impolite and did not show respect for teachers, causing so much trouble and stress. The teachers wanted to focus on this because they felt insecure. They did not know how to manage them. In the meeting teachers were sharing ideas about their own experiences, and they gave each other advice concerning classroom management. If anybody started to complain, the principal or the vice-principal tried to turn the perspective to focus on positive aspects of the same situation. The leaders expressed satisfaction with the meeting.

Will processes like this result in changes in the relationship between teachers and students? Are the leaders too cautious in their approach to change? Shifting perspective, this situation can also give an example of **the dilemma challenge versus support**. The teachers at this school have worked here for many years. Most of them are women, eager to rush home when the teaching duties are finished. The principal identifies the school to be traditional, and there is low motivation for experimenting with new approaches to teaching. They don't have pressure from parents either. In fact, according to the principal, most parents are satisfied with the work done by the teachers. Experimenting with new approaches will increase the insecurity at work. Teaching is already perceived as difficult

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[4] The description from Village school is based on fieldnotes from peer consultation, observation in a staff meeting and peer review. Village school is a primary school with 200 students and 18 teachers.

and overloaded. Seen from a cultural perspective, it is probably a good idea to take very small steps towards change at this specific school. According to the principal, support is the most important leadership strategy to use, even though he tries to be loyal to the superintendent's expectations of stimulating a more collaborative culture in the school.

The vice-principal at Village school is, however, more impatient. It is unveiled in her journalwritings:

> At this school the teachers feel so insecure when they have to do other things than being classroom-focused. The insecurity increases even more when we try to stimulate to school-based evaluation and planning, and ask them to evaluate their work systematically. To my surprise a lot of teachers neither have confidence and faith in themselves nor a professional attitude to their job. I wish I could make them change, give them new perspectives on their job, new challenges, make them feel they are developing. Extended professionalism is necessary today. That is what the common curriculum requires. But I really get depressed, when a 15 minutes increase in collective planning time creates a huge discussion within the staff. Sometimes I wonder, is it possible to initiate change at this school? I get so frustrated at the lack of enthusiasm, involvement and commitment among my colleagues. How is it possible to change them?

The vice-principal had been inspired by reading Stenhouse's statements about the teacher as a researcher; she wanted to initiate action research at the school, but found few interested. According to her there should be a limit for how much support teachers should get. A reflection from a principal at Oakridge school, a lower secondary school with 350 students, shows a similar frustration. Initiating change seems to be a difficult and almost impossible task:

> I really want to be a visible and assertive principal, but very often I do not succeed. [...] The staff is used to having a voice in every decision-making, and I can recognize this as important for raising enthusiasm and commitment. But there is a limit. This whole year I have been thinking about how to initiate peer review and a more collaborative culture when it comes to teaching at this school. But the staff wants to give other things priority. I have chosen not to insist on my proposition, but I am not satisfied with it. How can people give something priority if they don't know what it means? I have tried to use an implicit strategy, starting to talk about this more informally, and I can see interest is awaken in some. Everything would have been so much easier if only the superintendent could say: You must implement peer review! Then I could use my time on the motivation phase instead of this very slow process. The district office should be more demanding! (Or is this another excuse for me not being able to do what I want?)

in her journal writing the principal at Oakridge school wishes for more support from the superintendent. But the question still remains: Will it be of any help? Looking at schools from a micro political perspective, there are a lot of ways to resist steering. The principal has to convince staff that change both is necessary, good for the students and for the school. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that our choices are not always based on altruistic behavior. Many may have private privileges and interest to defend.

4.3.3 Loyalty to students/parents versus loyalty to teachers

Most leaders say they will place emphasis on the interests of students if there is a conflict between students and teachers. But in every-day practice, it is far more difficult. The principal is responsible for the caring of employees, and the teachers expect their boss to support them in conflicts. Sometimes it is also difficult to judge what is to the benefit of students. Often the principal chooses to compromise between different interests. A situation from Village school can illustrate this[5]:

> Two students in grade six have according to a teacher, been very impolite. The teacher insists on their making a formal apology in front of their classmates. The students understanding what happened differently, refuse. This makes the conflict even worse, and both the students and the teacher get into an awful wrangling. The teacher complains to the principal, and so do the students and their parents. After listening to both parts, the principal and the vice-principal think that the teacher in this situation has behaved unwisely. The conflict was probably caused by her way of talking to the students. Nevertheless, they have to find a compromise, and even though the teacher can be criticized, so can the students. They have also behaved badly. The principal and the vice-principal are afraid what will happen to the teacher's reputation in the neighborhood if they don't give her support. As employers they feel an obligation to be supportive both to teachers and students. While the students will leave for another school next year, the teacher will go on teaching at this school, and they have to take care of a good relationship. The challenge is to get both the students and the teacher to understand that the same incident can be understood from different perspectives. But will they succeed?

In one way this example shows that the long-run consequences are important when choosing what to do. Even though both the principal and the vice-principal agree with the

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[5] The description is based on separate interviews with the principal and the vice-principal. They both mentioned the same conflict when interviewed, probably because they were trying to find a compromise during the week when the interviews took place.

students, they choose not to show it. They fear a deep conflict with the teacher. This observation gives support to Campbell's (1993) conclusion concerning the way principals cope with ethical conflicts in schools. According to her study, principals are reported to justify administrative decisions based on consequentialist arguments. By doing this they reflect a decision making framework within which moral/ethical values are largely suspended.

> Suspended morality implies that while individuals may not "buy into" organizational values completely on a moral or ethical level, they behave, nevertheless, in accordance with institutional demands. |...| In a sense, individuals are able to "suspend" their own sense of morality to suit their personal situations, needs, and choices (Campbell 1993:9).

But when talking to the principal and the vice-principal about this incident, it becomes clear that their decision isn't only based on a desire to avoid conflicts with the teacher. It is felt as an ethical dilemma concerning right or wrong. An ethic of caring was visible in their reflection, and they wanted to be a caring person both to students and to teachers. But conflicts and guilt are inescapable risks of caring:

> Conflict arises when our engrossment is divided, and several cared-fors demand incompatible decisions from us. Another sort of conflict occurs when what the cared-for wants is not what we think would be best for him, and still another sort arises when we become overburdened and our caring turns into "cares and burdens". Any of these conflicts may induce guilt (Nodding 1984:18).

What happened at Village school can also be understood as a **dilemma between challenge versus support**. Which strategy will be perceived by whom as a caring strategy? The teacher has a problematic relation with these students, and she expects the principal to support her when she is getting into trouble. That is part of the school culture. What kind of leadership is needed in the long run? As both Huberman (1989) and Sikes et.al. (1985) have pointed out in their research on career cycles of teachers, human development is a far more discontinuous, fluid, dialectical and sometimes random business when one begins to look at individual lives. Having formal responsibility for teachers' development, it may be difficult for a principal to know when support is the right strategy for growth, and when challenge is a better alternative.

At the same time this incident has to do with **demands/confrontation versus individual**

autonomy. To confront this teacher can probably be very unpleasant to the principal. Maybe, after all, this is a case of suspended morality?

4.3.4 Ad hoc problemsolving versus reflection and long-term planning

The principals and superintendents participating in the project, were all concerned about how they could develop their competency. Their decision to participate in the project had partly to do with expectations of professional growth. Their espoused theory of leadership emphasized the importance of reflection and long-term planning, but their theory-in-use was more characterized by brevity, discontinuity and ac hoc problemsolving. There was always something else that needed their attention, and daily they had to respond to emergiences. Both journal writings, interviews and fieldnotes from peer review reveal this:

> I have become more and more aware of how important reflective activities are. But to find time for systematic reflection in every-day practice is problematic. You can't be a supervisor to teachers without competency. However, we always have too little time (journal writing from the principal at Pioneer school).
>
> When you are engaged in daily work and routines, and a lot of things are happening, to find time for reflection becomes a burden. There are always tasks you must do. [...] In fact, I found writing in a journal very time-consuming. It is a burden. However, I have experienced some benefit out of it. Participating in this project has stimulated more reflection. Usually I never write down my reflection, but I do reflect on what is happening (from the interview with the principal at Village school).
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> I give priority to be available for my staff. My door is always open. This means other tasks have to wait if teachers need to talk with me. Maybe that is a wrong priority? Maybe I should sometimes close my door in order to do some paperwork and more long-term planning? I always have to do paper work at home. I know I haven't managed to be an initiator of pedagogical change, even though I know the staff expect me to do it. I don't have enough time to do all of the tasks. In addition, I am not a very good ideological leader. Maybe I haven't realized how important it is. By participating in this project, I have discovered new aspects of leadership, and I think I have developed both my thinking and my skills. I am now motivated to take more education; I think I need it to become a real educator. But time is a problem. I am so dissatisfied by having so little time for administration and leadership (fieldnotes from Pioneer school: vice principal reflecting on his actions).

My question here is how real this dilemma is, when the patterns of resolution reveal that

ad hoc problemsolving is always given priority? Is the leaders' descriptions a way of defending why they haven't met expectations of being more reflective? The principals know the "right" answers. They have participated in several courses for leaders, and they have "learned" that long term planning, having a vision for their school, and reflection on action are important to call oneself professional.

Their reflections on action and sharing of experiences also reveal, that involvement in action research is not only stimulating. Systematically evaluating ones own practice with peers, can also be a painful process, resulting in an intensification of ones work.

> It was easier to be a principal before. All this discussion has resulted in a feeling of frustration and discouragement. There are so many expectations, and I experience a lack of competency, which is not a good feeling. So much ought to be done, and time is a very critical factor (principal at Village school).

> Participating in the project has given me a kick. I recognize new demands which can stimulate growth. I am more competent now, I think differently, and I have become more analytical. However, the more you are conscious about the work you are doing, the more difficult it is to be a leader. My days have become even more demanding, and I am more demanding towards other colleagues. I think it is important to know that everyone doesn't follow the same path and speed as oneself (principal at Country school).

What was earlier taken-for-granted is now questioned. Sometimes it feels very frustrating. Maybe faith in reflective activities is given too much weight in the discussion about professionalism in schools. But both principals and superintendents will, nevertheless, be involved in a struggle for negotiating, maintaining and renegotiating their legitimacy in order to influence the change process in schools. In this process analytical competency and reflection on action among peer may become crucial. But the criteria of legitimacy will vary in time and place and within the same staff. What will be the zone of influence?

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have looked at educational leadership in a perspective of dilemmas. The dilemmas experienced by principals and superintendents, constitute an analytic "language" for looking at leadership in action. Examples of **dilemmas of loyalty and steering** were analyzed in the perspective of **state legality and social legitimacy**. This offered an opportunity to relate what was happening within a local context, to more general political,

social and cultural issues, and to examine how the hierarchical structure and the micropolitical activities within schools both steer and restrict our activities and perceptions.

To understand dilemmas as reflections of the contradictions in society, doesn't remove the individual's responsibility to act. The individual person will interprete the dilemmas differently and have different capacities to manage the dilemma. Nevertheless, contradictions in society are an integral part of the explanation of the regularities explored. Individuals both shape and are shaped by structure and culture.

The immediate interpretation of a situation in terms of dilemmas, is seldom the only way of understanding what is happening. As demonstrated in the paper, the participants in the project experience that by clarifying one dilemma, another one may be unravelled. Sometimes the process of clarifying and reflecting on what is going on, causes more frustrations than emancipatory feelings for the participants. Apparently, this may have a connection to leaders' aspirations to be considered as professionals in a job where they feel they continually have to respond to daily emergencies.

To initiate change in schools probably presupposes a combination of change in structural frames and a practical and theoretical education for principal, superintendents as well as for teachers. This education should include an understanding of the type of control that state and society exercise on the school, as well as an understanding av the micro-politics of the schools.

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